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NEWS RELEASE



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**GRAND JURY INDICTS COUPLE FOR
NEARLY STARVING THEIR FOUR YEAR OLD DAUGHTER**

The Anchorage District Attorney's Office announced that yesterday an Anchorage grand jury indicted a couple for three counts of felony assault for nearly starving their four year old daughter to death. The couple locked the victim without clothing in a room darkened by aluminum foil covering the windows and lit only by a dim blue light. The little girl's seven year old brother helped her get milk occasionally, and she drank water from a toilet.

Juanita Kirkland is charged with depriving the four year old of food and water for a long period. Anthony Kirkland, a soldier at Fort Richardson, is charged with the same crimes because he knew what was happening and failed to protect his daughter.

Assistant District Attorney Mary Anne Henry explained, "A parent has a duty to protect a child from such conduct, and there is no excuse when you know what is going on but you do nothing to stop it."

Juanita Kirkland brought the child to Elmendorf Hospital in shock and semi-comatose earlier this year. The girl weighed only 22 pounds, while the average weight for a child that age is 45 pounds. Authorities almost immediately transferred the victim to Providence Children's Hospital, where medical personnel concluded that the abuse had gone on for several weeks or months, and that the child may have died in a matter of hours.

The defendants told investigators that they required the children to eat solid food before they could have any liquids and, if they did not eat everything, they got nothing to drink. They also said that that was the way they were raised themselves, and so that is how they were raising their children. Anthony Kirkland admitted he knew what was going on, but he didn't know how to stop it. All three children in the family have been placed in foster care.

A copy of the charging documents can be obtained by contacting Mary Anne Henry. Both defendants will be arraigned in Superior Court on Monday, August 18, 2003 at 1:45 p.m. They are free on \$2500 bail.